

Individual Replacement Training

In December 2007, after recently returning from OIF 06-08, the 20th Engineer Battalion was given the mission of conducting pre-deployment training for all late deployers and replacement Soldiers on Fort Hood. On 7 January 2008, the 20th Engineer Battalion began the relief in place process with the 41st Fires Brigade. Individual Replacement Training (IRT) consists of 32 FORSCOM required and 25 additional Southwest Asia required warrior tasks to include a variety of weapons training, first aid, combat lifesaver classes, battlemind and combat stress courses, and cultural and geographic instruction. With two ongoing fronts in the war on terrorism, IRT became a crucial element in order to support troop requirements in theater. Without a consolidated training program, late deploying and replacement Soldiers would have little resources to prepare for deployments.

On 3 March 2008, the Lumberjack Battalion assumed complete responsibility of their first class and began training 223 Soldiers as part of IRT Class 08-03. The battalion maintained command and control of the program, operated the Engagement Skills and HMMWV Egress Assistance Trainer (HEAT), small arms qualification ranges, and conducted several blocks of instruction to include personnel recovery, OPSEC/SAEDA, biometrics, warrior values, desert environment, and suicide prevention. In addition to the 20th, the 89th MP Brigade, 13th Sustainment Command, 1st Cavalry Division, 4th Infantry Division, 48th Chemical Battalion, and III Corps also participated in the training. Class sizes typically are 200 personnel and last 12 days, just over two weeks.



36th EN BDE Soldiers participate in combatives training during IRT

During the summer of 2008, the demand for Soldiers down range began to increase dramatically, putting pressure on III Corps and other Fort Hood units to get more Soldiers in the fight. In July 2008, the 20th Engineer Battalion answered the call and began conducting two classes per month, training on average over 380 Soldiers in a four week period. In order to meet the requirements with personnel and resources stretched thin, classes had to overlap and high intensity training, like small arms ranges, were consolidated. The dual rotation lasted four months until units in theater were sufficiently replenished. When this “IRT surge,” was complete, the battalion had trained and prepared over 1,460 Soldiers in four months.

In November of 2008, the 20th Engineer Battalion received word that civilians would be taking over the IRT program in 2009. Left and right seat transitions immediately began taking place in December. A team of retired Army Officers and Noncommissioned Officers would take the reins and the responsibility of providing quality training to deploying Soldiers. In February 2009, the new III Corps IRT team

officially took over, relieving the 20th Engineer Battalion of the mission. In the end, the battalion maintained responsibility of the IRT mission for 11 months, conducted 15 classes, and trained over 2,900 Soldiers in preparation for deployments in support of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom.

Written by CPT Thomas M. Wynn, Assistant S-3 Operations Officer, 20th Engineer Battalion. CPT Wynn has been a member of the battalion since September 2006 and deployed with the unit during OIF 06-08. Prior to assuming responsibilities as OIC of the IRT program in August 2008, CPT Wynn was actively involved in the program as the Executive Officer of the 510th Clearance Company, teaching Personnel Recovery and coordinating resources and personnel for classroom instruction, EST/HEAT, and small arms ranges.